

Social Service Human Relations Board
Minutes of the Regular Meeting, Thursday, February 22, 2007

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL: Acting President Wasko called the meeting to order at 7:43 p.m. Members present were Neilsen, Villareal, and Soglin. Absent members were Franz, and Chen. Staff present were Jones and Brown.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes of the regular meeting of January 25, 2007 were approved (M/S Neilsen and Villareal) and unanimous.

3-A. BROWN ACT TRAINING – City Attorney Terri Highsmith was present and provided the Brown Act training. A handout was provided for future reference.

Ms. Highsmith explained that the Brown Act can be basically understood using three assumptions. One, government business is the public's business. Two, the public has a right to participate in such business, including the right to be heard and the right to be on record. Three, the public needs to be notified of public meetings in order to be able to exercise their right of participation.

Ms. Highsmith's comments regarding the Brown Act included the following:

Public Meetings –Any time a quorum of the Board is present and there is an attempt to develop a consensus, this constitutes a meeting. Such meetings require public notice. The City Attorney provided scenarios to illustrate this point.

Notice Requirements – There are different public notice requirements for Regular Meetings, Special Meetings, and Emergency Meetings. Regular meetings need to be posted at least 72 hours in advance. Special meetings should be posted a minimum of 24 hours prior to the meeting. In the case of an emergency meeting, (i.e., a crippling disaster) the notice of a public meeting should occur as soon as possible.

Public notices usually include an agenda, and the agenda should be specific enough to inform the public of the meeting's business. The items on the agenda are either action or non-action items. Agenda items should pertain only to issues within the Board's jurisdiction, as defined by the Board's charter.

The public has a right to the agenda packets. The City charges \$.10 per page for paper copies.

Email – Discussions and deliberations including a quorum of Board members (verbally or on email) outside of a Public Meeting is a violation of the Brown Act. Highsmith mentioned that an appropriate response to an email that may violate the Brown Act would be to invite the author to a Public Meeting to discuss the email topic, rather than to engage in discussion through email.

Work Groups and Sub Committees – Subcommittees and workgroups comprised of fewer than a quorum of Board members, city staff, and/or volunteer members do not constitute public meetings and are not subject to the Brown Act.

Violations – Any Brown Act violation can be prosecuted by the District Attorney's office.

Enforcement – If a member of the public has a complaint, s/he would refer it to the City Attorney's (CA) office; the CA would determine if a violation had happened. If a violation has occurred the

meeting would likely have to be conducted again in a method that complies with the Brown Act. Additional public recourse was also addressed.

Informal Gatherings – A social event is appropriate as long as the members do not discuss Board business. Conferences and attending another Board meeting are allowable, but no business or deliberation should occur.

3-B. BOARD GOALS AND OBJECTIVES – Jones reminded the work group members that there are seven recommendations from the Community Needs Assessment. She suggested that workgroups meet this month to review suggested work plans and make revisions based on the recommendations. Workgroups will be responsible for setting their own priorities and drafting timelines. Workgroups will report on progress during the next meeting.

3-C. REVIEW FOR REPORTING VOLUNTEER HOURS – Staff member Jones briefly reminded the Board that they should be recording their volunteer hours, and that the total number of volunteer hours will be reported at the end of the year by each Board member. A sample form was provided to aid in recording of volunteer hours.

3-D. COLLABORATION WITH COMMISSION ON DISABILITY ISSUES – Member Nielson will attend the next meeting of the Commission on Disability Issues on Monday, February 26th. She will provide information on the SSHRB's Community Needs Assessment and share a list of disability-friendly resources.

President Wasko reminded the Board to be mindful of the Brown Act in making presentations to other Boards and Commissions.

3-E. WORKGROUP STATUS REPORTS –

Assessment and Awareness – Nothing to report.

Alamedans Together Against Hate – Member Villareal reported there are changes with AMCCC, but there may still be an opportunity to coordinate a diversity event. After the next meeting more information will be available.

Family Services Workgroup – Acting President Wasko reported that the Guggenheims are no longer involved with Alameda Towne Centre and even though Harsh said the Festival of Families can still go on they have set limitations to only 10-12 community organizations, and all activities have to be inside a store front. The workgroup decided that effort should be focused on the ATAH diversity festival instead.

Sister City Workgroup - Nothing to report.

4. BOARD / STAFF COMMUNICATIONS - Staff member Jones reported on the status of the 211 Eden I&R Referrals Call-In system. Eden I&R is still attempting to secure funding from jurisdictions but plans to begin a test phase.

Jones reminded the Board that the EveryOne Home Plan was scheduled for the March 6th City Council meeting and that Acting President Wasko would be present.

Member Jones reminded the Board that each year the Board hosts a joint session with the Mayor and Council. She polled the Board for a May date. Jones will facilitate confirming a date with the Mayor and Council.

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

6. ADJOURNED – Acting President Wasko adjourned the meeting at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Jones
Secretary, Social Service Human Relations Board

MJ:sb